

Fahrenheit 451 comparison



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian novel written by Ray Bradbury that depicts a futuristic American society where books are banned and independent thought is persecuted. Bradbury uses his imagination to take a hard look at a world consumed by technology, and he presents predictions about pleasure, violence and anti-intellectualism that are alarmingly similar to the modern American society. Notably, in both societies people find pleasure in entertainment that is endlessly preoccupying. Second, people are violent and careless.

Finally, anti-intellectualism and suppression of independent thought affect both societies, as firemen ban books in Fahrenheit 451 and, in the modern society, authorities ban books that do not align with their moral and religious beliefs. There are many relations between the society portrayed in Fahrenheit 451 and the modern American society, first of which is the way people achieve happiness. Firstly, Bradbury accurately depicts the future with media bombarding people's lives. In Fahrenheit 451, instead of small black and white televisions, characters live in rooms called "TV parlours. In these TV parlours, the entire walls are plated with massive flat screen televisions, sending out fast images with bright colours and loud noises. These TV parlours consume the characters' lives and distract them from reality. In one scene, Montag is trying to gain his wife's attention, yet she avoids him by saying she is preoccupied with her digital family on the TV program. For example, "" Will you turn the parlour off? " he asked. " That's my family. "" (Bradbury, Page 48) This shows that media in the novel obscures people's perspective of reality.

Later in the novel, Montag claims that if his wife would die, he would not cry of her death, but cry because he would not cry of her death. Other characters also say this, proving that families in Fahrenheit 451 are not attached through feelings, but merely a mutual agreement to marriage. It is slightly humorous to think someone could be so obscured by media to say the characters in a television show are their family, while ignoring their real family members. However, people in modern society display similar behaviours.

Soap operas such as “ As The World Turns” have become the focus point for thousands of people in today’s society. They plan their lives around this hour long segment of their day, and speak of the characters within the show as if they are next door neighbours or even part of their own family. Sometimes, people even talk to the characters as if they can hear them, or shout lines before the character actually does. This behaviour, influenced by mass media, is present in both Fahrenheit 451 and today’s society.

Second, Fahrenheit 451 depicts an overly violent society that is frightfully similar to modern America. Children go to the “ Fun Park” where they have fun shouting loudly, breaking windows and fighting each other. To let out their anger, adults drive their beetle mobiles extremely fast and run over small animals such as rabbits and squirrels. Clarisse, an outcast in the novel, explains this violence from a third person perspective, " I'm afraid of children my own age. They kill each other. Did it always used to be that way? My uncle says no.

Six of my friends have been shot in the last year alone. Ten of them died in car wrecks. I'm afraid of them and they don't like me because I'm afraid. My

uncle says his grandfather remembered when children didn't kill each other. But that was a long time ago when they had things different. " (Bradbury, Page 30) Since Clarisse is an outsider in the novel, she is able to step back from the norm and evaluate it from a different perspective. In this quote, she explains the violence of the other children and how they use it as an outlet.

In Fahrenheit 451, people convince themselves they are happy, but obviously are not because they have violent behaviours. This craving for violence marks the dissatisfaction of the general populous. The " Fun Park" and the theme of violence in Fahrenheit 451 are very similar to an annual contest currently held in Albany, New York. It is an organized event where children use various types of guns to shoot and kill as many squirrels as they can within a certain time. The child with the heaviest bag of squirrels wins. Adults say this is a great way for children to let out their anger and get closer to nature (1).

Modern American society clearly provides examples that are just as brainwashed and idiotic as exhibited by the people of Fahrenheit 451's society. Finally, throughout the novel Bradbury presents a conflict between ignorance and understanding. The general society is being numbed into believing that knowledge makes people disagree with each other and unhappy. To prevent people from reading and gaining knowledge, the firemen burn all books. By committing these actions, they are promoting sameness and ignorance, to supposedly maintain happiness among society.

Captain Beatty explains the history of firemen to Montag, speaking of their society's view of equality. " We must all be alike. Not everyone born free and equal, as the constitution says, but everyone made equal . . . A book is a

loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man's mind. " (Bradbury, page 58) Captain Beatty is hinting that books encourage people to question authority and think about why things are done the way they are done. Over the years, numerous books have been banned from schools and libraries in the United States (2).

Classics such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* challenge society's hypocrisy and question why laws protect some people and not other, when the American constitution states " all men are equal. " The goal of burning or banning books is to limit people's access to different views, and some justify it maintains harmony within a society, but really it maintains the authority's control of people. This act of anti-intellectualism through suppression of knowledge is present in both *Fahrenheit 451* and modern American society.

It is chilling to see the number of examples which show that today's society is similar to the society depicted in *Fahrenheit 451*. In both societies, people are brainwashed by watching television all day long and ignoring reality and nature. People show violent behaviours and are inconsiderate to other's feelings and insensitive of the impact of their actions. Lastly, authorities in both societies promote ignorance through suppression of knowledge. Bradbury's novel is as relevant of a warning today as it was when it was written in the 1950s.